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12 13	*Pro Hac Vice admission to be filed Attorneys for Plaintiff Edwardo Munoz and the Classes	
141516	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA, WESTERN DIVISION	
17 18	EDWARDO MUNOZ, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, Plaintiff,	Case No.
19 20	V.	CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
21	7-ELEVEN, INC., a Texas corporation,	JURY TRIAL DEMANDED
2223	Defendant.	
24 25 26 27 28	Plaintiff Edwardo Munoz ("Plaintiff" or "Munoz") brings this class action complaint against Defendant 7-Eleven, Inc. ("Defendant" or "7-Eleven") to obtain redress for, and put an end to, Defendant's serial violations of the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1681, et seq. ("FCRA" or "Act"), specifically its failure to provide lawful notices and disclosures to its job applicants and employees as well	
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CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

as its failure to provide applicants and employees with notice and an opportunity to respond prior to undertaking adverse action against them. Plaintiff, for his Class Action Complaint, alleges as follows upon personal knowledge as to himself and his own acts and experiences, and, as to all other matters, upon information and belief, including investigation conducted by his attorneys.

NATURE OF THE ACTION

- 1. Enacted to promote the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of consumer information contained in the files of consumer reporting agencies, the FCRA explicitly protects job applicants and existing employees from adverse employment action taken as a result of potentially inaccurate or immaterial information. To that end, employers who obtain and use consumer reports regarding their applicants and employees are required to provide: (1) clear and conspicuous disclosures, in a document consisting solely of the disclosure (*i.e.*, that stands alone), prior to obtaining consumer reports in the first place, and (2) copies of the reports they obtain, together with a written summary of rights under the Act, prior to taking any adverse employment action against the applicants/employees based on information contained in such reports.
- 2. Defendant willfully violates the FCRA by: (1) failing to provide a clear and conspicuous or standalone upfront disclosure that Defendant may procure consumer reports about its applicants and employees, and (2) failing to provide its applicants and employees with copies of such reports and the required summaries of their FCRA rights before taking adverse action against them.
- 3. Consumer reports and investigative consumer reports, while both being types of consumer reports, are not one in the same. They are subject to distinct disclosure requirements. When an employer procures a standard "consumer report" regarding an applicant, it must provide a clear and conspicuous disclosure that stands alone pursuant to Section 1681b(b)(2); however, when an employer procures an investigative consumer report (an invasive type of consumer report that features

interviews with a multitude of potential sources) regarding an applicant it must comply with the disclosure requirements of *both* Section 1681b(b)(2) and Section 1681d(a)-(b). (*See*, *e.g.*, Advisory Opinion to Beaudette, available at https://www.ftc.gov/policy/advisory-opinions/advisory-opinion-beaudette-06-09-98.)

- 4. To comply with both provisions, the FTC has made clear that an employer cannot include the required Section 1681d(b) disclosures with the Section 1681b(b)(2)(A) disclosure because doing so overshadows the latter disclosure and, thus, violates Section 1681b(b)(2)(A)'s requirement that the disclosure be clear and conspicuous and "in a document that consists solely of the disclosure." (*See, e.g.*, FTC Advisory Opinion to Willner, available at https://www.ftc.gov/policy/advisory-opinions/advisory-opinion-willner-03-25-99.)
- In 7-Eleven's case, Defendant fails to provide its applicants or employees with a standalone disclosure and authorization that clearly and conspicuously indicates in a document consisting solely of the disclosure that Defendant may obtain a consumer report about them for employment purposes. First, Defendant provides a single disclosure combining both the disclosure required for a standard consumer report as well as disclosures required for an investigative consumer report, including details regarding the nature and scope of any investigation such that the disclosure overwhelms the consumer report disclosure. The disclosure and authorization also contain additional extraneous information about Sterling Talent Solutions and summaries of FCRA rights, as well as additional language purporting to authorize the preparation of reports by Sterling Talent Solutions. The authorization also purports to give consent to any party or agency contacted by 7-Eleven, Inc. to furnish information to it, and contains acknowledgements that the consumer has read and understood the disclosure and that they may have any employment offer revoked if "unacceptable information is found in an investigative background inquiry or consumer report. (See Disclosure &

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Authorization, a true and accurate copy of which is attached hereto as Ex. A.) The disclosure cannot be considered standalone.

- 6. The inclusion of such extraneous information and the overshadowing of the consumer report disclosure rendered the disclosure confusing to Plaintiff and other class members. By including combined disclosures, it is unclear as to whether 7-Eleven intends to procure a standard consumer report, an investigative consumer report, or both. This lack of clarity frustrates the purpose of the FCRA, which is to inform consumers and allow them a meaningful opportunity to authorize such disclosures. Indeed, had a lawful disclosure been provided Plaintiff and others would not have signed it.
- 7. Defendant has also willfully violated the FCRA by taking adverse action—including firing its employees—against its job applicants and employees based in whole or in part upon consumer reports or investigative consumer reports that it procured about them without providing such applicants/employees with "preadverse action" notice prior to taking action. Instead, Defendant takes adverse action against applicants and employees without providing a copy of the consumer report procured about them or a description of their rights as required by Section 1681b(b)(3)(A). As such, Defendant serially violates the FCRA.
- 8. As a result of Defendant's willful violations of the FCRA, employees and applicants such as Plaintiff Munoz are deprived of rights, including privacy rights guaranteed to them by federal law, and are thus entitled to statutory damages of at least \$100 and not more than \$1,000 for each violation. *See* 15 U.S.C. § 1681n(a)(1)(A).

PARTIES

- 9. Plaintiff Munoz is a natural person and citizen of the State of California. He resides in Merced, Merced County, California.
- 10. Defendant 7-Eleven is a Texas corporation with its principal place of business located at 3200 Hackberry Rd. Irving, TX 75063-0131.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 11. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331 because this action arises under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1681, *et seq.*, which is a federal statute. Furthermore, jurisdiction is proper under the Class Action Fairness Act, 28 U.S.C. § 1332(d), *et seq.* ("CAFA"), because the classes each consist of over 100 people, at least one member of each class is from a State other than Texas (the state of the Defendant), and the amounts in controversy are over \$5,000,000. Further, none of the exceptions to CAFA jurisdiction apply.
- 12. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because it conducts substantial business in this District and the unlawful conduct alleged in the Complaint emanated from this District.
- 13. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because a substantial part of the events and omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in the District. Plaintiff was hired at a 7-Eleven location in Los Angeles, California and worked there for a month prior to being terminated based on information contained in a background check obtained about him in relation to his employment.

FACTS COMMON TO PLAINTIFF AND ALL COUNTS

- 14. 7-Eleven is a corporation based in Irving, Texas.
- 15. In or around January 2018, Plaintiff applied for a job with 7-Eleven at a store in Los Angeles, California.
- 16. In or around January 2018, Plaintiff was required to complete various acknowledgments of company disclosures including a disclosure regarding Plaintiff's background and criminal history.
- 17. Rather than provide a standalone disclosure—as the FCRA requires—Plaintiff was presented with a document entitled "Disclosure Regarding Background Investigation," which included the disclosures for both a consumer report and an investigative consumer report, including details regarding the nature and scope of any investigation, together with other extraneous information, including details about

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- Sterling Talent Solutions and its privacy policy, acknowledgements that documents have been received and reviewed and that the signer understands that by signing they may have an offer revoked, and an authorization purporting to grant "any party or agency contacted by 7-Eleven, Inc." to furnish whatever information 7-Eleven requests. (See Ex. A.)
- 18. The unnecessary inclusion of such extraneous information rendered the document confusing to Plaintiff and the average consumer. That is, because 7-Eleven fails to provide a clear and conspicuous disclosure in a document consisting solely of the disclosure as required by the FCRA, Plaintiff was unable to meaningfully authorize the report, or reports, that 7-Eleven intended to procure about him. Plaintiff would not have authorized the background check had a lawful disclosure been provided.
- 19. Plaintiff was employed by 7-Eleven for approximately one month, starting January 26, 2018.
- On or around February 21, 2018, 7-Eleven terminated Plaintiff, an 20. adverse employment action, based on information contained in the background check it had procured regarding Plaintiff.
- 21. Plaintiff did not receive a pre-adverse action notice, a copy of the consumer report, or a summary of his rights under the FCRA at that time.
- 22. Simply put, 7-Eleven fails to give applicants any opportunity to review and discuss the report and any inaccuracies within it prior to taking adverse action.
- 23. As the FTC has made clear, applicants and employees are supposed to be afforded the opportunity to review the background check/consumer report and discuss it with their prospective employer before losing out on a job (or having other adverse action taken against them) because of information contained in the report. The FTC has ruled that in general, an employer should wait at least five (5) business days following the notice to the applicant or employee of the anticipated adverse action—together with a copy of the report and a summary of the applicant's/

24. Because of the unlawful disclosures provided to applicants and employees, including Plaintiff, as well as Defendant's failure to give applicants an opportunity to remedy any issues with the consumer reports prior to termination, Defendant has willfully denied Plaintiff the rights guaranteed to him by the FCRA. Such violations entitle him, and other similarly situated, to statutory damages of not less than \$100 and not more than \$1,000 per violation.

CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS

25. Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(b)(2) and Rule 23(b)(3) on behalf of himself and two nationwide Classes defined as follows:

Disclosure Class: All persons in the United States who (1) from a date two years prior to the filing of the initial complaint in this action to the date notice is sent to the Disclosure Class; (2) applied for employment with Defendant; (3) about whom Defendant procured a consumer report; and (4) who were provided the same form FCRA disclosure and authorization as the disclosure and authorization form Defendant provided to Plaintiff.

Adverse Action Class: All persons in the United States who (1) from a date two years prior to the filing of the initial complaint in this action to the date notice is sent to the Adverse Action Class; (2) were subject to an adverse employment action; (3) based in whole or in part upon any consumer report procured by Defendant; and (4) who, like Plaintiff, had an adverse action taken against them before they were provided any notice of a contemplated action together with a copy of the report and a summary of rights under the FCRA.

California Subclass: All members of either of the Disclosure Class or the Adverse Action Class who reside in California.

- 26. Excluded from the Classes and Subclass are (1) Defendant, Defendant's agents, subsidiaries, parents, successors, predecessors, and any entity in which Defendant or its parents have a controlling interest, and those entities' officers and directors, (2) the Judge or Magistrate Judge to whom this case is assigned and the Judge's or Magistrate Judge's immediate family, (3) persons who execute and file a timely request for exclusion, (4) persons who have had their claims in this matter finally adjudicated and/or otherwise released, and (5) the legal representatives, successors, and assigns of any such excluded person. Plaintiff anticipates the need to amend the Complaint following a reasonable period for class discovery.
- 27. **Numerosity:** The exact numbers of the members of the Classes and Subclass are unknown to Plaintiff at this time, but it is clear that individual joinder is impracticable. Defendant has thousands of employees and potentially an even greater number of job applicants. Further, the Class and Subclass members can readily be ascertained through Defendant's records and the records of Sterling Talent Solutions.
- 28. **Commonality:** Common questions of law and fact exist as to all members of the Classes and Subclass for which this proceeding will provide common answers in a single stroke based upon common evidence, including:
 - (a) Whether Defendant's conduct described herein violated the FCRA;
 - (b) Whether Defendant has procured or caused to be procured consumer reports about job applicants and employees;
 - (c) Whether Defendant's disclosure violates the FCRA's requirement that the pre-report disclosure be clear and conspicuous in a document consisting solely of the disclosure;
 - (d) Whether Defendant has provided a pre-adverse action notice and, if not, the extent of its failure to provide such notices;
 - (e) Whether Defendant has acted willfully;
 - (f) And for the Subclass the proper measure of statutory damages and the availability and appropriateness of declaratory and injunctive relief.

- 29. **Typicality:** As a result of Defendant's uniform disclosures and conduct, Plaintiff and the Class and Subclass members suffered the same injury and similar damages. If the disclosure violated the FCRA as to Plaintiff, then it violated the FCRA as to all job applicants and employees. Thus, Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the other Class and Subclass members.
- 30. Adequate Representation: Plaintiff is a member of the Classes and Subclass and both he and his counsel will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the Classes and Subclass, as neither has interests adverse to those of the Class and Subclass members and Defendant has no defenses unique to Plaintiff. In addition, Plaintiff has retained counsel competent and experienced in complex litigation and class actions. Further, Plaintiff and his counsel are committed to vigorously prosecuting this action on behalf of the members of the Classes and Subclass, and they have the financial resources to do so.
- 31. **Injunctive and Declaratory Relief:** In using uniform disclosures that violate the FCRA and by uniformly failing to provide pre-adverse action notices as required, Defendant has acted or refused to act on grounds generally applicable to Subclass so as to render injunctive and declaratory relief appropriate under the California Unfair Competition Law ("UCL") Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq. For the Subclass members, Defendant's uniform conduct requires the Court's imposition of uniform relief to ensure compatible standards of conduct toward the Subclass members, thus, making final injunctive and/or declaratory relief appropriate with respect to the Subclass as a whole. Further, because Defendant's uniform practices result in similar, if not identical, injuries for all Subclass members, Plaintiff's challenge of those practices hinges on Defendant's conduct with respect to the Subclass, not on facts or law applicable only to Plaintiff.
- 32. **Predominance:** The common questions of law and fact set forth above go to the very heart of the controversy and predominate over any supposed individualized questions. Irrespective of any given Class or Subclass member's

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situation, the answers to whether Defendant's pre-report disclosure and failure to provide pre-adverse action notices are unlawful is the same for everyone resounding "yesses" on both questions—and they will be proven using common evidence.

- Superiority and Manageability: A class action is superior to all other 33. methods of adjudicating the controversy. Joinder of all class members is impractical, and the damages suffered by/available to the individual Class and Subclass members will likely be small relative to the cost associated with prosecuting an action. Thus, the expense of litigating an individual action will likely prohibit the Class and Subclass members from obtaining effective relief for Defendant's misconduct. In addition, there are numerous common factual and legal questions that could result in inconsistent verdicts should there be several successive trials. In contrast, a class action will present far fewer management difficulties, as it will increase efficiency and decrease expense. Further, class-wide adjudication will also ensure a uniform decision for the Class and Subclass members.
- Plaintiff reserves the right to revise the definition of the Classes and 34. Subclass as necessary based upon information obtained in discovery.

COUNT I Violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(b)(2)(A)(i) (On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Disclosure Class)

- Plaintiff incorporates by reference the foregoing allegations as if fully 35. set forth herein.
 - The FCRA declares that: 36.

Except as provided in subparagraph (B), a person may not procure a consumer report, or cause a consumer report to be procured, for employment purposes with respect to any consumer, unless—

(i) a clear and conspicuous disclosure has been made in writing to the consumer at any time before the report is procured or caused to be procured, in a document that consists solely of the disclosure, that a consumer report may be obtained for employment purposes

15 U.S.C. § 1681b(b)(2)(A) (emphasis added).

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The FCRA defines a consumer report as: 37.

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... any written, oral, or other communication of any information by a consumer reporting agency bearing on a consumers' credit worthiness, credit standing, cred-it capacity, character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living which is used or excepted to be used or collected in whole or in part for the purpose of serving as a factor establishing the consumer's eligibility for . . .

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(B) employment purposes . . .

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15 U.S.C. § 1681a(d)(1).

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38. Defendant's background checks are consumer reports.

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- The pre-report disclosure that 7-Eleven provided to applicants and 39. employees combines disclosures required for consumer reports with disclosures required for investigative consumer reports. That is, Defendant provides a single disclosure combining both the disclosure required for a standard consumer report as well as disclosures required for an investigative consumer report, including details regarding the nature and scope of any investigation such that the disclosure overwhelms the consumer report disclosure.
- 40. The disclosure and authorization also contain additional extraneous information about Sterling Talent Solutions and summaries of FCRA rights, as well as additional language purporting to authorize the preparation of reports by Sterling Talent Solutions. The authorization also purports to give consent to any party or agency contacted by 7-Eleven, Inc. to furnish information to it, and contains acknowledgements that the consumer has read and understood the disclosure and that they may have any employment offer revoked if unacceptable information is found in an investigative background inquiry or consumer report.
- The disclosure and authorization that Defendant provided to Plaintiff and the Disclosure Class members willfully violated the FCRA by not being clear and conspicuous, by being unnecessarily duplicative, and by including extraneous

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information such that the disclosure cannot be said to "stand alone" in a document that consists solely of the disclosure. Plaintiff and the other class members wouldn't have authorized the reports had appropriate disclosures been provided.

- 42. Defendant procured consumer reports with respect to Plaintiff and the Disclosure Class members. The disclosures provided to Plaintiff were the same or substantially the same as the one provided to all Disclosure Class members. Thus, Defendant uniformly violated the FCRA rights of all Class members in the same way and, in the process, violated their right to information and their privacy rights as delineated by Congress.
- 43. Defendant's violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(b)(2)(A)(i) was willful for at least the following reasons:
 - (i) The rule that FRCA disclosures be "clear and conspicuous" and part of a document consisting "solely" of that disclosure has been the law established for well over a decade.
 - (ii) Defendant is a large corporation who regularly engages outside counsel—it had ample means and opportunity to seek legal advice regarding its FCRA responsibilities. As such, any violations were made in conscious disregard of the rights of others.
 - (iii) Clear judicial and administrative guidance—dating back to at least the 1990s—regarding a corporation's FCRA responsibilities exists and is readily available explaining that such disclosures must stand-alone. This readily-available guidance means Defendant either was aware of its responsibilities or plainly should have been aware of its responsibilities but ignored them and violated the FCRA anyway.
- 44. Plaintiff and the Disclosure Class are entitled to statutory damages of not less than \$100 and not more than \$1,000 for each of Defendant's willful violations pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1681n(a)(1)(A).

45. Accordingly, under the FCRA, Plaintiff and the Disclosure Class seek statutory damages, reasonable cost and attorneys' fees, and such other relief as the Court deems necessary, reasonable, and just.

COUNT II

Violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(b)(3) (On Behalf of Plaintiff and the Adverse Action Class)

- 46. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the foregoing allegations as if fully set forth herein.
 - 47. The FCRA provides that:
 - (3) Conditions on use for adverse actions.
 - (A) In General. Except as provided in subparagraph (b), in using a consumer report for employment purposes, *before taking any adverse action* based in whole or in part on the report, the person intending to take such adverse action shall provide to the consumer to whom the report relates—
 - (i) a copy of the report; and
 - (ii) a description in writing of the rights of the consumer under this subchapter, as prescribed by the Bureau under section 1681g(c)(3) of this title.

See 15 U.S.C. 1681b(b)(3) (Emphasis added).

- 48. The FCRA defines adverse action as "a denial of employment or any other decision for employment purposes that adversely affects any current or prospective employee." 15 U.S.C. § 1681a(k)(1)(B)(ii).
- 49. In construing the FCRA, the FTC made clear, applicants and employees are supposed to be provided the opportunity to review any background check/ consumer reports obtained in regards to them and to discuss it with the employer before losing out on a job (or having other adverse action taken) because of information contained in the report. The FTC has stated repeatedly that in general an employer should wait at least five (5) business days following the notice to the applicant or employee of the anticipated adverse action—together with a copy of the report and a summary of the applicant/employees' FCRA rights—before actually

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CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

- taking the adverse action. This notice advises the applicant or employee of their ability to discuss the report with their employer. (See, e.g., FTC Advisory Opinion to Weisberg, available at http://www.ftc.gov/policy/advisory-opinions/advisoryopinion-weisberg-06-27-97.)
- 50. After obtaining a consumer report about Plaintiff for employment purposes, Defendant—based in whole or in part on information contained in Plaintiff's consumer report—revoked Plaintiff's employment offer, an adverse employment action. Plaintiff had been working for a month at that point.
- 51. Defendant violated Section 1681b(b)(3)(A) of the FCRA by failing to provide Plaintiff and members of the Adverse Action Class with pre-adverse action notice together with a copy of the report and summary of rights under the FCRA. Instead, Defendant evaluates each applicant's and employee's consumer report and takes adverse action against them without sending any pre-adverse action notice. Defendant's failure to provide the required notice frustrates the purpose of the FCRA and robs applicants and employees of a meaningful opportunity to discuss any negative information in their consumer reports with Defendant prior to the decision to take adverse action, as intended by the FCRA.
- 52. Defendant's violations of 15 U.S.C. § 1681b(b)(3)(A) were willful. The rule that employers must give applicants and employees an opportunity to remedy any discrepancies with their consumer reports directly with the employer prior to any adverse action being taken is well established. Defendant is a large corporation that has retained lawyers on staff and regularly engages counsel—it has ample means and opportunity to seek legal advice regarding their FCRA responsibilities. Further, there is a glut of judicial and administrative guidance—dating back to the 1990's regarding a corporation's FCRA responsibilities. As a consequence of such readily available guidance, Defendant was either aware of its responsibilities or should have been aware of its responsibilities but violated the FCRA anyway.

- 53. Plaintiff and the Adverse Action Class are entitled to statutory damages of not less than \$100 and not more than \$1,000 for each of Defendant's willful violations pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1681n(a)(1)(A).
- Accordingly, under the FCRA, Plaintiff and the Adverse Action Class 54. seek statutory damages, reasonable cost and attorneys' fees, and such other relief as the Court deems necessary, reasonable, and just.

COUNT III

Violation of the California Unfair Competition Law Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq. (On Behalf of Plaintiff and the California Subclass)

- Plaintiff incorporates by reference the foregoing allegations as if fully 55. set forth herein.
- Defendant's failure to provide a clear and conspicuous disclosure and 56. authorization under the FCRA that "stands alone" violated the unlawful prong of the UCL.
- Defendant's failure to provide a pre-adverse action notice in accordance 57. with the FCRA violated the unlawful prong of the UCL.
- Defendant's violations are ongoing and continuing and will likely occur 58. in the future absent an order from this Court enjoining 7-Eleven from continuing to violate the FCRA with respect to California residents.
- 59. As such, Plaintiff and the California Subclass members are entitled to injunctive relief and corresponding declaratory relief, attorneys fees, and such additional relief as the Court deems necessary, reasonable, and just.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Edwardo Munoz, individually and on behalf of the Classes and Subclass, respectfully requests that this Court issue an order:

Certifying this case as a class action on behalf of the Classes and Α. Subclass defined above, appointing Edwardo Munoz as class representative and appointing his counsel as class counsel;

1 2 **JURY DEMAND** 3 Plaintiff requests a trial by jury of all claims that can be so tried. 4 Respectfully submitted, 5 6 Dated: May 8, 2018 Edwardo Munoz, individually and on behalf 7 of all others similarly situated, 8 By: /s/ Mike Arias Mike Arias (CSB #115385) 9 mike@asstlawyers.com
Alfredo Torrijos (CSB #222458)
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